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THE LEADERS REPORT TO THE WORKING PEOPLE

- USSR -

By V. Shurygin

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FOREWORD

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[Following is a translation of an article by V. Shurygin in the Russian periodical *Kommunist* (The Communist), Vol. XXXVI, No. 3, February 1960, Moscow, pages 45-52.]

Today the Soviet people entertain joyous and glorious thoughts-- thoughts about the Seven-Year plan; the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party, the fourth session of the Supreme Soviet USSR, and their wise and sagacious decisions; the speech and report of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev in which the untiring devotion of the party and government to the welfare of the people was manifested with such great sincerity.

Honoring the numerous requests for speakers and lecturers, the party committees are experiencing turbulent days. Everyone wants to hear the vivid, vital story of the Plenum of the Central Committee and the session of the Supreme Soviet, of how our socialist state is moving forward with Herculean steps, how industry and agriculture will be developed throughout the country and in Orenburg Oblast, and what the tasks of the second year of the Seven-Year plan will be. Under these conditions, one of the most important requirements of mass political work becomes particularly significant--that of strategy and flexibility, the ability to explain well and opportunely to the people the decisions of the party and the government, to thoroughly satisfy their ideological interests.

To whom should this important matter be entrusted?

When it was necessary to explain to the workers and peasants the plan for electrifying the country, V. I. Lenin wrote: "Everyone sufficiently trained, scientifically and practically, must be mobilized to propagandize the electrification plan..." (*Selected Works*, Vol. 31, p 499). How topical these words of Lenin are even today! Indeed, all cadres that are sufficiently trained must be immediately drawn into the work of propagandizing the decisions of the XXI Congress of the CPSU, the December Plenum of the CC, and the session of the Supreme Soviet USSR, in order to relay the deep purport and significance of these historic decisions to all workers, to help each citizen determine his place in the national struggle for pre-schedule fulfillment of the Seven-Year Plan.

It is generally known that present success in mass political work can be achieved only if it is guided mainly by the supervisory cadres. Their participation in political work strengthens ties with the masses, making it possible for the party organizations to note and opportunely assimilate everything new and useful created through the initiative of the people, and, at the same time, to disclose defects and rapidly take steps to eliminate them.

The direct participation of leadership in political agitation is the most important condition for the success of the over-all activity of the party in educating the workers. Business-like everyday contact with the masses must be an important criterion in evaluating the work of each leader and this is emphasized in the decree of the CC CPSU, "Conditions and steps for improving mass political work in Stalinsk Oblast." A task of leaders of party, soviet, trade-union, Komsomol, and economic organizations is to systematically report to the workers.

As in other oblasts, groups of speakers and lecturers work in our oblast through the obkom [oblast committee], the gorkom [city committee], and raykom [rayon committee] of the party. In the obkom group are secretaries, managers, and deputy managers of departments of the obkom; leaders of the oblispolkom [Oblast Executive Committee]; managers of oblast' departments and directorates; leaders of the sovnarkhoz [Council of the National Economy], institutes, and other oblast organizations and institutions.

Before the lecturers go out to the rayons and cities, the secretaries of the obkom instruct them. It is important that the oblast worker go to the rayon not just to give a report or lecture. This is not enough for the leader. He must also be an organizer, and show by word and deed how to fight for technical progress in industry, and how to raise the level of the kolkhozes and sovkhoses further. And therefore the lecturer must himself study the concrete problems of the economy thoroughly, and know the situation in the oblast and in his rayon. This then is how he will help to instruct.

The reports of the leaders who speak before the people must be related especially closely to them and understood by them; these reports must also be related to practical matters so that the workers will better understand the tasks posed before them. V. I. Lenin said that "nothing will be accomplished through a mere repetition of the truths of 'pure' Communism." He demanded that agitation and propaganda be related to the policies of the Communist Party and to questions of economic construction.

The instructions of Lenin are particularly valuable today, now that Communism has become the practical task of the day. Political work has been called upon to mobilize the workers to fulfill the grandiose national economic plans. One must bear in mind that the speech of a leader will reap much benefit only if the leader carries on a direct and sincere exchange with the workers, and does not try to smooth away the sharp angles, by-pass difficult questions, or, as is said, tack.

The collective and state farms of the oblast decided to deliver and sell to the state 165,000 tons of meat in 1960--the equivalent of almost two yearly quotas--and in this way fulfill their meat quota planned for the end of the Seven-Year Plan; to sell not less than 390,000 tons of milk--35,000 tons in excess of the plan and 65,000 tons more than in 1959; and to sell no less than 75 million eggs--11 million more than last year. Agricultural workers have pledged themselves to increase the gross yield of grain, to obtain 100 poods from each hectare this year, and to deliver 129 million poods of grain to the government.

Of course all these pledges are the result of the persistent organizational and political work in which the leading cadres participated. They did not go into the agricultural rayons for just one or 2 days. It is virtually useless for a leader to flash by like a meteor, make a few reports in a slap-dash manner, and then go home. As a rule, the lecturers of the rayon stay in the rayons for 7-10 days.

Recently, groups of lecturers in the gorkom and raykom have become more active. Party organizations are concerned that all leading cadres participate directly in mass political work in the cities and rayons all, not just party leaders. A group of lecturers of the Orsk gorkom, for example, have made an excellent account of themselves. It is comforting to see the personal example set in Orsk by the secretaries of the gorkom, raykoms, and primary party organizations. And there is still one more notable phenomenon as regards this city: the directors of plants, chief engineers, and heads of shops frequently speak before the workers on important questions of party policy. For we know that those who understand thoroughly the concrete questions of the economics of industry can explain them in detail to the masses, and thus relate the internal and foreign policy of the party to the practical tasks on which the collectives of industrial enterprises make decisions. At the same time, such speeches help to propagate the experience of production innovators.

To make the experience of leading workers the property of thousands, or even of millions, is the noble and honorable concern of each leader. V. I. Lenin repeatedly expressed this thought. In 1918 he wrote: "Right now we must concern ourselves that the mass of unusually valuable material which we have in the form of the experience of a new organization of production in individual cities, in individual enterprises, in individual rural communes, become the property of the masses" (Selected Works, Vol. 27, p. 178). And, under present conditions, the propagandizing and inculcation of all the best in industry and agriculture is one of the chief tasks of mass political work.

The decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU, "The tasks of party propaganda under contemporary conditions," has opened up to party organizations and the entire Soviet community vast opportunities for strengthening ideological work. It has provided a clear-cut program for propaganda and agitation, and has determined their main direction, content, form, and method for the period of the extensive construction of Communist society in our country. By drawing practical conclusions from the decree of the CC CPSU, the obkom, rayon, and raykoms are taking steps to improve propaganda and agitation work. As the CC CPSU requires, we must embrace all segments of the population, reaching each citizen with our political influence.

After the decree of the CC we thoroughly analyzed the state of affairs on our ideological front. We saw, in particular, that some leaders seldom speak before individual groups of workers, for example, before women. Women as a rule participate in the general measures conducted by party organizations, but, as is known, they have their own interests. The obkom decided to conduct rayon and oblast conferences of women in agriculture, and then conferences of women in industry and construction. Leaders of raykoms and the obkom of the party will give reports at these conferences. This will be the beginning of systematic and varied mass political work among women.

The decree of the CC concerning party propaganda exerts a tremendous influence on the activities of the agitkollektivy [propaganda units]. Many party organizations are expanding and strengthening the ranks of agitators from among leaders.

Not everything, of course, goes along smoothly and evenly. There are still frustrations, defects, and omissions. We still find among oblast and rayon leaders "hermits" who shun reports and chats with the workers, and among the executives there are those who feel that political work with the masses is the affair of just the party workers. We have other tasks; they say--to set plans in motion, to beat out materials, to provide enterprises with raw materials. They do not understand--nor do they want to understand--that under Soviet conditions economy and politics are inseparable and that economic successes depend upon the people.

The ideological interests of the masses are growing, and it is now impossible to limit the speeches of leaders to big days, to the occasion of great events either inside the country or abroad. It must be admitted that not in all party organizations by far are the leading cadres attracted to political work among the working class. The obkom indorses the following task: in each city and rayon the leaders are pledged to speak before the people no less than 2 or 3 times a month.

Usually the leaders give their reports before a tremendous audience. But one should not underevaluate talks with groups, individual workers, collective farm workers, in, let us say, a Red Corner, apartment, dormitory--everywhere where there is an opportunity. In such chats it is sometimes possible to give the people a better answer regarding some question, and to learn about their life and prevailing spirit better than in more crowded meetings.

In sending lecturers to cities and rayons, the obkom of the party is concerned about whether that they have been listening to the remarks of the workers and collective farm workers, whether they have helped to eliminate defects, and whether they have showed that they care about cultural and everyday needs and interests. For it is known that political work (including such forms as reports, lectures, and talks) must touch every facet of life of the Soviet citizen. The lecturer is not a good one who makes a good report but remains indifferent to the life of the people. It should be stated, though, that the majority of party obkom lecturers give serious attention to the cultural and everyday needs of the people. Recently, for example, a lecturer of the party obkom, comrade Semin, manager of the oblistpolkom [Oblast Executive Committee], went to Lyuksemburg Rayon. The collective farm workers requested him to help them obtain machinery for an inter-collective farm hydroelectric station. Comrade Semin did not brush them off. After he returned from his duty, he went to the appropriate oblast organization, he was persistent, and machinery for the power station was allocated.

Frequently the lecture itself or a report helps to awaken interests and to arouse the collectives to show greater concern for the people. Such a fact indicates the efficacy of the lectures and reports. Recently there was a lecture in the Orenburg tie-impregnating plant about the moral make-up of the Soviet citizen. It vividly and persuasively discussed the friendship and mutual help of the Soviet people. The lecture caused a lively exchange of opinion. Then factory matters were brought up. The chairman of the women's soviet proposed that a home for a worker, comrade Zhulev, be built; "He has a family of five and his wife is in the hospital. He had begun to build a home but he lacked enough money. The whole collective should help him." And they found stove-makers, glaziers, and carpenters. The women kept house. The zavkom [factory committee] and management found it possible to help him with materials and money. The plant collective helped this man, built him a home, and now his family is well off.

This shows the many--most of all, the remarkable--qualities of the Soviet people, who are always ready to come to the aid of one another. And not a small role in the development of these noble qualities, these Communist traits of character, is played by those lecturers and speakers who with their warm, sincere words and simple heart-to-heart talks arouse pure thoughts and feelings in the people.

Callousness, indifference to the interests of the people, to their way of life, is intolerable. The bureau of the party obkom threshed out the question of reports of oblast leaders to the people in order to increase the responsibility of our cadres as regards political work with the masses and satisfying the just demands of the workers. Some leaders were sharply criticized at the plenum of the obkom and oblast party conference for seldom speaking before the workers, and for not always being attentive to the needs of the people. Success in political work, as is well known, depends on the themes of the reports, lectures, and talks. And it is here that it is important to know the moods, wishes, and interests of the masses.

Let us cite another example. Oblast leaders who have gone to collective farms and given reports there have recounted in the obkom that they have most frequently been asked how the transfer to monetary pay for the labor of kolkhozniks will be effected. The obkom decided that this question should be discussed in more detail in reports during ordinary trips to the agricultural rayons. This was done. In addition a lecture on the monetary payment of labor on collective farms was prepared and distributed to various places. Articles on this same theme appeared in oblast and rayon publications.

When the party committee maintains continual contact with the masses, it of course knows what interests and arouses the workers, and it is not difficult to find subjects for the reports, lectures, and talks, which are of general interest not only to all but also to individual groups of the people.

Political reports are not the only form of participation of party, soviet, and economic cadres in political work and the education of the workers. It is becoming more frequent, for example, for leaders to give accounts of the work of the institutions, enterprises, and organizations which they head. This strengthens the bond between the leader and the workers, increases the activity of the masses in the management of production, and helps to eliminate defects. Such meetings are a school for the political education of people.

The accounts of the sovnarkhoz [Council of the National Economy] were recently discussed in many oblast enterprises. Serious questions were raised in the speeches of the leaders of the Orenburg Kirov plant. Comrade Lukovenko, the chief technician of the plant, stated that the sovnarkhoz must actively help the enterprises to strengthen their ties with scientific research institutions. A further growth of production is possible only with mechanization and automatization. The plant collective has frequently raised the question of threshing out a number of important technical and economic problems before some scientific research institutes, but the institutes have waved aside the requests of the plant. The sovnarkhoz took steps in accordance with many observations.

Sunday readings have found great popularity in Homes of Culture and in clubs and Red Corners in industrial enterprises, building projects, state farms, collective farms, and institutions. Their themes have been varied. Here, for example, are some lectures and reports given on Sundays in January in Orenburg: "Results of the December Plenum of the CC CPSU," "The Fourth Session of the Supreme Soviet USSR," "The International Situation," "Future Prospects for the Development of Orenburg in the Seven-Year-Plan," "The Creativity of A. P. Chekhov," "Soviet Literature in Modern Times," "Natural Resources of Orenburg and Their Use in the Seven-Year-Plan," "How to Conduct Oneself in Society," "How Religion and Faith in God Arose," and others. In Teplov Rayon the following lectures and reports were given, in addition to the lectures on the results of the December Plenum of the CC CPSU and the fourth session of the Supreme Soviet USSR: "The Struggle for a Healthy Way of Life Is a Matter of Concern to the Whole Community," "Atheistic Education of Children in the Family and School," "The XXI Congress of the CPSU on Practical Ways to Eliminate Wars from the Life of Society," "Educating Children in Respect for Work," and others.

The Sunday readings are attracting an ever increasing number of workers. This is explained by the fact that party, soviet, and farm leaders participate in them. The audience usually asks many questions. The Sunday readings frequently conclude with a lively discussion, in the course of which observations are made concerning the work of certain institutions and enterprises, and proposals are advanced.

Leaders have many opportunities to participate personally in agitation and propaganda. Here it is important not to be content with the usual methods, and not to stop with what has already been attained. Standard and stereotype are not to be put up with in political work.

Such a mass form of political work as an evening of questions and answers, for example, fully justifies itself. The experience of the Buzuluk gorkom is interesting. A notice hangs in the enterprise or collective farm for 8-10 days announcing that there will be an evening of questions and answers, and indicating which of the leaders will participate. This arouses tremendous interest among the people. Thus the collective farm House of Culture in the Stalin agricultural artel (Derzhavinskiy sel'sovet /village soviet/) could not seat everybody wishing to attend such an evening. The secretary of the party gorkom, the chairman of the rayispolkom /rayon executive committee/, the manager of the departments of national education and social security, the public prosecutor, and the chief of agricultural inspection answered questions. The collective-farm workers received answers and explanations to literally every question of interest to them. In turn, the leaders of the rayon were satisfied with this interested meeting. Many questions raised by the collective farmers were then reviewed in the party gorkom and rayispolkom.

It was noted in the decree of the CC CPSU that there still are a considerable number of party, soviet, and agricultural leaders who do not participate personally in propaganda activity. Also, there are quite a few such leaders who forget that persistent work to raise their ideological and theoretical level, that maintaining daily close communication with the people, that explaining to the masses the great ideals of Marxism and Leninism and the mobilization of the workers to translate party policies into reality, are inalienable tasks and the important responsibility of every Communist, and even more so of the Communist leader.

Each must understand that only those who have deep and many-sided knowledge and thorough theoretical training can successfully lead the unit entrusted to them or conduct efficient political work with the masses. Therefore the duty of party organizations is to assure the proper political training of the leading cadres. Last year, workers in oblast organizations attended a 2-year economic school attached to the obkom. At present, study of the most important problems of the history of the party, and primarily of the activity of the Communist Party after the XX and XXI Congresses, has been organized in the obkom. There are theoretical seminars in the raykoms and gorkoms.

As was emphasized in the decree of the CC CPSU on party propaganda, the point of emphasis in the organization of political enlightenment must be shifted to political self-education as the basic method of mastering the theories of Marxism and Leninism, as the method which, on the whole, justifies itself in practice. In the political self-education of cadres, party organizations concentrate their main attention on collective seminar forms of independent training.

It is now more important than ever that the party organizations place the question of general and special education before the leaders. Each leader, whether secretary of a gorkom, plant director, chairman of a collective farm, or department chief, must have the necessary knowledge. Therefore, if he does not have sufficient education, he must study with others at some educational institution. Times are such today that one cannot get very far with merely a single skill or a single vital experience. We have many good examples in this regard. But there are still some leaders who are not studying anywhere. Therefore it is very difficult for them to give political reports to the people or to conduct agitation-propaganda work. Such a leader dreads a large audience, fearing that he will not be able to answer their questions correctly.

The main thing as regards reports and lectures is their ideological content. But we must also devote a great deal of attention to vivid, understandable forms of explaining the material. It is important that any lecture, any report, be interesting and easy for an audience to understand. This is one of the most important conditions for militant and convincing agitation and propaganda. It is known that there are still many lectures and reports that could lull an audience to sleep with their monotony and tedium, and freeze people with their cold indifference. The material is good and the facts are interesting, but it does not kindle the hearts of the people nor arouse them because there is no passion, no enthusiasm; because the speaker himself is frequently quite indifferent to the expounded facts, speaks from his paper, and is unable to tear his eyes away from what he has written. Recently we attended a lecture given before kolkhozniks by one of the leaders of Lyuksemburg Rayon. For almost an hour he monotonously read a text which had been prepared by other comrades. At first they listened anyhow, then they began to fuss: but the lecturer, not paying any attention to the commotion, continued reading the text. Then a member of the audience begged, "Don't read every line of the text, but every other line, so you'll finish sooner." "It's impossible to do that," objected the speaker, and he conscientiously read to the very end.

The party obkom has organized several lectures on speech training for lecturers and speakers. In Orenburg, Orsk, and a number of agricultural rayons, inexperienced speakers attend the lectures and reports of comrades who have had vast experience in agitation and propaganda work. But this is not enough. The speakers must strive systematically to raise their ideological and cultural level, to sharpen their speech, and to attain the skill of an orator. And the most basic thing is that leaders must increase their responsibility as regards political speeches to the workers.

Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev is an excellent example of all this. He maintains contact with the people by thousands of ties, being excellently informed as to the needs, aspirations, interests, and prevailing spirit of the workers. N. S. Khrushchev's sources for this information are his numerous trips throughout the country, his meetings with the people, his daily communication with the masses of workers, their letters which pour in from all corners of our boundless fatherland. We are more and more convinced of this, reading N. S. Khrushchev's speech at the December Plenum of the CC CPSU.

Of great importance for party, soviet, and agricultural leaders is constant communication with the masses. And here all forms must be used. It is good for a leader to give a detailed report, but a simple, sincere talk is of even more value. Political-information talks, for example, have recently been held every week in many enterprises and on collective farms of the oblast. These reports may be short, but such a form of participation by the leading cadres in agitation work completely justifies itself.

One must not, of course, overlook such an efficient and strategic form of political work as the printed speeches of the leading cadres. However large the audience of a speaker, agitator, or propagandist may be, it cannot compete with the vastness of the press. Newspapers and the radio--these are the widest rostrums for the political leader and the most flexible means by which party committees can systematically communicate with the working people.

Each time that new tasks are placed before the party organizations, each time that it is necessary to express an opinion on a given question of principle, the obkom turns to the press and the radio. The main themes of the speeches of the leading cadres are frequently planned in the obkom in connection with the reactions of the oblast newspapers and the radio. Here, as in any other matter, the initiative of the leader is important. It is bad for a man to take up a theme that he does not feel from the soul, a theme that does not arouse his own interest. This would result in a more formal speech. It is another matter when a man writes according to the dictates of his heart and conscience, when he raises questions which he has studied well. Such a speech in newspapers is read far and wide, and strikes a chord in the readers.

We were once again convinced of this recently when the oblast party organization waged a decisive battle for a system which is new in principle (in conformity with the conditions in our oblast) for cultivating the soil and seeding with grain crops. It was decided to transform lumpy, hilly ploughland into deep ploughland, leveled early in the fall; and to eliminate some methods, previously considered obligatory, of spring soil preparation.

The speeches in the press and on the radio of the leaders of the party obkom and oblispolkom and of scientists on these questions played a prominent role in the victory of advanced new agricultural techniques. And what tremendous public response the skillful speeches of the leading cadres on agrotechnology in cultivating corn evoked! The radio talks and newspaper articles were heard and read with such great interest that they have become a unique aid for agricultural workers.

It is possible to cite other examples showing the richness of the arsenal of means and forms of the personal participation of the leading cadres in political work with the masses. But, there are many omissions here. The most important is that we must once and for all overcome the chief defect: the alienation of agitation and propagation from life, from the practice of Communist construction. In a number of party organizations of the Abdulin, North, Khalilov, and Troitskiy rayons agitation and propaganda work does not touch upon such fundamental questions as improvement in the harvesting of agricultural crops; every aspect of the development of cattle raising and an increase in the production of meat, milk, and other products; the future mechanization of agriculture; increased labor productivity and lowered costs of production; the study and introduction of advanced experience.

Political work with the masses requires daily and concrete guidance, a deep knowledge of subject, strategy. This is precisely what many of our party organizations have not yet grasped. The oblast committee of the party sees as its task perfecting the guidance of agitation and propaganda and the Communist education of the broad masses of the workers by relying on our accumulated experience.

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